

## **NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 17 April, 2015**

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## Office of First and Deputy First Minister

### Programme for Government

**Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry)** - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the revised Programme for Government will be published.

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Work on an extension to the current Programme for Government, to include the 2015/16 year, is currently underway. We intend to bring forward an Executive Paper and following Executive approval and Committee notification, the revised Programme for Government will be published.  
**(15<sup>th</sup> April)**

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### Goods, Facilities and Services Legislation

**Mr Chris Lyttle (APNI – East Belfast)** - To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the proposed Goods, Facilities and Services legislation will ensure that no sections of society are discriminated against; and what is the timescale for the introduction of this legislation.

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** We made a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to those aged 16 and over.

Subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive agreement, we intend to issue a consultation document in the near future setting out our proposals for legislation. When we have concluded our policy consultation, and agreed a robust policy position, we will then consider all the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly. **(16<sup>th</sup> April)**

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## Department of Education

### Early Years Fund

**Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry)** - To ask the Minister of Education what impact his Department's cut to the Early Years fund is likely to have in rural areas where organisations receive their sole, or majority, funding from the Early Years fund.

**Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education):** The Early Years Fund (EYF), (administered by Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children) was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a “closed” Fund since then to only those groups that were in need of support at that time.

Groups currently supported by the Early Years Fund which are also offering funded pre-school places within the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) will continue to be funded through the PSEP. In accordance with the Programme for Government commitment to ensure that at least one year of pre-school is available to every family that wants it, I have allocated sufficient funding to Education and Library Boards to meet the projected need for pre-school places for children in their final pre-school year. The Pre-School Advisory Groups will monitor the situation and take any necessary action to ensure that a place continues to be available for every child whose parent wants it.

The Executive's Budget has been reduced by the Westminster Government by £1.5bn over the last five years. As a direct result of this reduction there is significantly reduced money to spend on frontline services such as Education. I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department of Education's (DE) remit. However, it is simply impossible to protect everything.

I have ensured that budget is available in 2015/16 to enable all recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015. I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond that date. However any such fund will have to be open to all applicants, not just current recipients, and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

I am aware that many programmes have made a positive impact on the lives of individuals and communities; however, it is essential to provide stability to the education budget and the education service moving forward and therefore maintaining all core services at current levels was simply not deliverable. **(14<sup>th</sup> April)**

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### **Early Years Funded Projects**

**Ms Claire Sugden (IND – East Londonderry)** - To ask the Minister of Education what contingency plans his Department has developed to address the removal of access to vital services for children, and their families, who currently benefit from Early Years funded projects.

**Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education):** The Early Years Fund was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a “closed” Fund since then to only those groups that were identified as in need at that time.

The Executive’s Budget has been reduced by the Westminster Government by £1.5bn over the last five years. As a direct result of this reduction there is significantly reduced money to spend on frontline services such as Education. I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department of Education’s (DE) remit. However, it is simply impossible to protect everything.

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## **Education Authority Board**

**Miss Michelle McIlveen (DUP – Strangford)** - To ask the Minister of Education when the first formal meeting of the Education Authority Board will take place. **[Priority Written]**

**Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education):** The first formal meeting of the Education Authority will take place on Thursday 30 April 2015. **(15<sup>th</sup> April)**

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## **Hydrotherapy Pool at Roddensvale School**

**Mr Oliver McMullan (Sinn Féin – East Antrim)** - To ask the Minister of Education whether the hydrotherapy pool at Roddensvale School in Larne will go ahead as planned in the current financial year. **[Priority Written]**

**Mr J O'Dowd (Minister of Education):** The Executive's budget has been reduced by the Westminster Government by £1.5bn over the last five years. As a direct result of this reduction there is significantly reduced money to spend on frontline services such as Education. I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department of Education's remit. However, it is simply impossible to protect everything so difficult decisions will have to be made about prioritising schemes for capital investment.

Roddensvale School is a controlled special school and as such the Education Authority (EA) has responsibility for it. It is therefore for the EA to consider what schemes will be funded this year from within its capital allocation. Priority will have to be given to inescapable statutory requirements, such as health and safety and obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act; as well as to contractually committed works. I understand that the EA is considering the prioritisation of schemes within the available capital budget. Both I and the EA remain committed to this scheme but the timing of delivery is dependent upon the available budget. **(15<sup>th</sup> April)**

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## Special Educational Needs

**Mr Chris Hazzard (Sinn Féin – South Down)** - To ask the Minister of Education to detail the number of children attending an Irish-medium school who have a statement of Special Educational Needs, broken down by (a) naíscoil; (b) bunscoil; and (iii) meánscoil level.

**Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education):** The table below shows the number of pupils that have a statement of special educational needs in Irish medium schools (note that this does not include Irish medium units in English medium schools). The total number of pupils has also been supplied for the purposes of providing context.

### Pupils in Irish medium schools<sup>1</sup> that have a statement of special educational needs<sup>2</sup>, 2014/15

	Number of statemented pupils	Total number of pupils
Pre-school <sup>3</sup>	*	855
Primary schools (years 1-7)	53	2,738
Post-primary schools	21	581

Source: NI school census

#### Notes:

- Figures do not include pupils in Irish medium units in English medium schools
- Figures include pupils at stage 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
- Pre-school figures include pupils in Irish medium voluntary and private preschool centres, and nursery units in Irish medium primary schools.

\* denotes fewer than 5 pupils suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils.  
(17<sup>th</sup> April)

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## **Promoting Integration of Education**

**Mr Stewart Dickson (APNI – East Antrim)** - To ask the Minister of Education to outline the measures put in place by his Department to promote the integration of education.

**Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education):** My Department funds NICIE to promote integrated education. Funding of £632,000 is being provided to NICIE in the 2015/16 financial year.

In addition, I am committed to ensuring my Department’s statutory duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education continues to be discharged fully, positively and proactively. I am also currently considering the need for and scope of a future review of integrated education. **(17<sup>th</sup> April)**

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## Department for Employment and Learning

### Youth Training Systems

**Mr Alban Maginness (SDLP – North Belfast)** - To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning what actions he, and his Department, have taken to engage with training providers, community and voluntary organisations and Health and Social Care Trusts to ensure proper preparation, recognition and reward for best practice in youth training systems.

**Mr J O’Dowd (Minister of Education):** My department recently completed a 12 week public consultation on the review of youth training interim report. As part of this consultation process consultation documents, and invites to two roadshows, were issued to over 4,500 stakeholders including training providers, community and voluntary organisations and Health and Social Care Trusts.

In addition, the review’s expert panel, set up to advise upon the review, included representatives from training providers, voluntary and community voluntary organisations and from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust within its membership.

My department is also leading on the development of a United Youth Programme, and has been engaging with a range of organisations, including training providers and community and voluntary organisations, via a co-design process, to develop pilot projects. The Design Team that was set up to provide advice on programme development includes representation from the community and voluntary sector and the Public Health Agency.  
**(14<sup>th</sup> April)**

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## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

### Welfare Reform

**Mr John McCallister (IND – South Down)** - To ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what impact the current deadlock on Welfare Reform is having on inward investment to Northern Ireland.

**Mrs A Foster (Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):** The Stormont House Agreement had an expectation that progress on a Welfare Bill in Northern Ireland would occur in parallel to the progression of the Corporation Tax Devolution Bill in Westminster. I hope that all parties will deliver on the agreement reached in the Stormont House Agreement. (14<sup>th</sup> April)

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## Department of Health

### Policy Reviews

**Mr Kieran McCarthy (APNI – Strangford)** - To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all ongoing policy reviews within his Department, including the (a) commencement date; and (b) the expected inalization date for the reviews.

**Mr J Wells (Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety):** The following policy reviews are currently ongoing within my Department:

<b>DHSSPS REVIEW</b>	<b>Commencement Date</b>	<b>Expected Finalisation Date</b>
Safeguarding Children and Young People	April 2014	Early 2016
Adult Safeguarding	March 2009	Summer 2015
Imaging Services	August 2013	Late 2015
Sir Liam Donaldson Report – Review of Governance across the HSC	August 2014	Summer 2015
Children’s Palliative & End Life Care	September 2012	Summer 2015
Paediatric Review	September 2012	Summer 2015
Evaluation of the Individual Funding Request	September 2014	May 2015
Consultant Led Hospital Dental Services	July 2011	Summer 2015
Adult Care and Support	September 2012	Autumn 2020
Continuing Healthcare	October 2014	September 2015

<b>DHSSPS REVIEW</b>	<b>Commencement Date</b>	<b>Expected Finalisation Date</b>
Administrative Structures within the HSC	November 2014	Ongoing
Review of Commissioning	April 2015	Summer 2015

(14<sup>th</sup> April)

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